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SUBJECT: A/S Frazer's Meeting with AU Commission Chair Alpha Oumar Konare

1.(U): This cable is from U.S. Mission to the African Union (USAU) Ambassador Dr. Cindy L. Courville.

[1](#)2. (U): SUMMARY

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi E. Frazer met with AU Commission Chair Professor Alpha Oumar Konare on September 7, 2007 at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Their discussions focused on Darfur and on Somalia.

END SUMMARY

[1](#)3. (U): PARTICIPANTS

AU

Professor Alpha Oumar Konare, AU Commission Chair
Mr. Kayumbu Mazimhaka, AU Commission Deputy Chair
Amb. Said Djinnit, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security
Professor C.A.L. Johnson, Secretary to the AU Commission Amb. John Shinkaye, Chief of Staff of the AU Commission Chair's Cabinet

USG

A/S Frazer
Amb. Cindy Courville, USAU
Daphne Titus, USAU
Berouk Mesfin, USAU
Lauren Landis, AF/SPG

DARFUR

[1](#)4. (SBU):: The meeting began with A/S Frazer saying that she felt significant progress was made on Sudan. She felt comfortable with the UN resolution and with the fact that peace talks are moving forward. She emphasized the need to adopt an approach to the peace process which included talking to all parties, bringing in the IDPs, and making sure that Abdul Wahid does not stand outside the process, is not marginalized and is effectively brought in.

[1](#)5. (SBU): On the Government of Sudan's (GoS) acceptance of the UNSC resolution, A/S Frazer indicated that the GoS was moving forward because of the stringent sanctions applied by the USG. Although she would like the sanctions lifted as soon as possible, A/S Frazer underlined the importance of keeping the pressure on the GoS. She

also stressed that the ball was now in the court of the UN and the AU.

¶16. (SBU): Chairperson Konare appreciated A/S Frazer's assessment and set out to explain the developments of the past few weeks. He said that although he understood the errors committed by the GoS, he felt that it was not necessary to impose sanctions as there has been a change in behavior on the part of the GoS. He asserted that the best way forward was to play a card of confidence. Chairperson Konare said that the political groundwork ought to be done and maintained, and that, at the same time, all partners and African Heads of States ought to take a firm stand. He said that the African Heads of State took such a firm stand in 2006 when they refused the AU presidency to Sudan. It was reinforced, according to Chairperson Konare, by the Arab League in general and King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in particular, the latter putting tremendous political pressure on Sudan.

¶17. (SBU): Chairperson Konare reiterated his position that it was important to have faith in the GoS, but at the same time, necessary to show resolve and vigilance towards the GoS and the rebel movements. He hopes the USG will play this card of confidence, and also told French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner in July to keep playing this card. Chairperson Konare mentioned that he thought the Gordon Brown/Nicolas Sarkozy offensive did not reflect the situation on the ground. He disputed the prevailing notion of Sudan being a burning house, although he acknowledged that there were problems that needed to be addressed and actions that should even be condemned.

¶18. (SBU): Chairperson Konare pointed out that if the Darfur problem is not resolved quickly, it could spill over and create unmanageable consequences, not only for Sudan but also for the whole of Africa. He said that he has clearly told the Sudanese that the AU was

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fighting for one Sudan, a democratic Sudan that accepts diversity. He declared that the independence of the South was not a solution, and noted that the late John Garang understood the risks of independence. He further said that the AU has repeatedly told the various neighbours of Sudan not to play the game of destabilizing Sudan. Chairperson Konare clearly stated that destabilizing Sudan would result in destabilizing the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and even the Sahel.

¶19. (SBU): In reference to the upcoming UNGA, Chairperson Konare asserted that the Darfur meeting scheduled for September 21 in New York will provide a forum to facilitate evaluation of the political process and the implementation of the UN resolution, and also help speed up the process. He said that the meeting will have senior level participants, and organized under AU/UN auspices, as well as bring in humanitarian and human rights organizations working in Darfur. The GoS would be invited; the USG and the EU could participate as observers. He said that listening to all the parties involved was of primary importance. He further said that an agreed calendar listing dates for the implementation of resolutions and decisions must be created.

¶110. (SBU): As far as Darfur is concerned, Chairperson Konare feels that, despite obvious weaknesses in management and logistics, the AU is searching for a formula that will enable it to move forward as quickly as possible. He said that waiting for the perfect or ideal situation was simply imprudent. The important thing for him was for relevant parties to analyze the existing possibilities for deployment. He hoped, as in his statements in Khartoum, to rely on the African troops at hand that can be deployed quickly. Then, it would be possible to bring in the UN to help in the domains where no African troops have volunteered and, at the same time, avoid the creation of a crisis of confidence on the part of the GoS.

¶111. (SBU): Chairperson Konare emphasized that it was crucial to strike an agreement between the rebel movements and the GoS. Such an agreement could create a solid basis to move forward. Chairperson Konare added that Abdul Wahid has failed to clearly articulate what he wants, and has only himself to blame for failing to negotiate and obtain guarantees from the GoS.

¶12. (SBU): First, A/S Frazer raised concern about the delay in the UN appointment of the Rwandan the Deputy Force Commander. She said that the USG had done vetting and would like to see the appointment confirmed. Secondly, she also raised concern that the mission should not exclusively be composed of African troops, highlighting the participation of a Chinese engineering company. She felt that accepting a sequencing of deployment in Sudan that involved going to the limits of African forces before infilling with non-African troops was neither feasible nor effective, and would undermine efforts to recruit for Somalia, where the participation of African peacekeepers is even more critical.

¶13. (SBU): In response, Chairperson Konare emphasized the importance of avoiding a crisis of confidence with the GoS. He then stated that the AU has received no evidence whatsoever of improper conduct against Rwandan Deputy Force Commander Major General Karenzi Karake. Konare also said that the Deputy Force Commander still has the confidence of the AU, and that he had already instructed Commissioner Djinnit to tell the Deputy Force Commander to immediately proceed to his post. If some negative evidence is forthcoming in the future, the AU will take the appropriate measures. He stressed the fact that the Rwandan troops are the most exemplary in all the engagements they participate in, that he did not wish to create confusion in their ranks, and that he especially did not want to create the impression of defiance towards President Kagame without reason.

¶14. (SBU): During the discussion of African troops, Chairperson Konare underscored the need for a common understanding. He said that, frankly speaking, there were a lot of difficulties during the negotiations with the GoS. Thus, a compromise was warranted, in the sense that African troops will deploy first to fill required billets. If there are not enough African troops available to fill the required billets, then non-African troops would be called in. At this point, A/S Frazer commented that the resolution only used the term predominantly African. Chairperson Konare replied that such language represented a UN game. He has repeatedly told UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Guehemo that the UN should take care of management, logistics and other technical

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aspects of the hybrid.

¶15. (SBU): A/S Frazer again noted that in no text, whether UN Security Council resolutions or PSC communiques, was it mentioned that the Darfur mission will only be filled by African troops. She added that doing it in sequence could create a problem, and that the force should not be all-African. A/S underlined that all relevant written documents only state that the force will be predominantly African, and states such as Nepal and Bangladesh are willing and able to send troops.

¶16. (SBU): Commissioner Djinnit and Deputy Chairperson Mazimhaka then explained to Chairperson Konare that while most of the force would be African, it may be necessary to deploy non-African troops in the early phase of the deployment before December 31, such as the Chinese engineers and the Nepalese. They emphasized to Chairperson Konare that the overall balance in the end will result in a predominance of African troops. Chairperson Konare pointed out that that he was not a military planner, and accepted the explanation provided by Djinnit and Mazimhaka. Chairperson Konare underlined that the AU values the support of both the UN and USG and that all three working together could only increase the efficiency of the mission in Darfur. He said that the AU had absolutely no reason to support the GoS. He said that, at no time, did he change his stance on the matter. He affirmed the need to avoid misunderstandings and to continue having discussions, and declared that the AU cannot move forward without the support of the USG. Chairperson Konare said that is essential to maintain a common front in order to resolve the Darfur problem. Otherwise, the GoS will be able to play on the lack of a common front.

¶17. (SBU): Chairperson Konare said that it was not easy for the UN and the AU to arrive at a common understanding. The AU always tried to move forward with what it has at its disposal, and then make

adjustments. Konare reiterated the importance of not perpetually giving the impression that the GoS cannot be trusted even if there are credible reasons to doubt its sincerity. He drew attention to the large amount of incentives the USG offered to the GoS in previous years; offers that were not taken up by the GoS and that are no longer on the table as a result. Maintaining the common front was, for Chairperson Konare, the only way to force the GoS not to spoil the present window of opportunity. Despite, the track record of the GoS, Chairperson Konare believes that compromise is sometimes needed to go forward as the situation can change completely, for instance, if the rebel movements and the GoS reach a deal.

SOMALIA

¶18. (SBU): Chairperson Konare stated that Somalia was clearly a big problem. He mentioned the meeting of Somali opposition forces organized by the Eritrean Government on September 6. Chairperson Konare was convinced that the date for the meeting was not innocent as there was a meeting of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission on the same day. He said that it was the anti-Ethiopian feeling that united the forces gathered in Asmara, the same anti-Ethiopian feeling displayed by President Isaias. Chairperson Konare said that this sentiment is dangerous and could lead to war if all concerned parties including the AU and USG are not cautious. He said that he did not have all the facts about the conclusion of the Somali reconciliation conference in Mogadishu. Yet, he believed that the conference did not reach its goal as testified by what was underway in Asmara. He said that there are many things that need correction, and that broadening the dialogue with some of the forces sitting in Asmara. He declared that African troops ought to be quickly sent to Somalia, thus ensuring the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops.

¶19. (SBU): He also said that a worrying factor was the weakness of the present Somali Government and undue foreign interference. Chairperson Konare is convinced that only a strong and representative government, which takes care of the people's problems and has its own capable army, can bring a solution to the actual Somali conflict. The two ways of having a representative government were, according to him, either having elections or establishing an all-inclusive dialogue. He said he was surprised to hear the Somali Government talk of holding elections within two years. Holding such elections in the absence of real political parties, of freedom of press and uncompromised businessmen would only give power to the Islamists who totally hold sway over the Somali social fabric.

¶20. (SBU): Chairperson Konare said that it was easier and less

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costly to help set up a strong government with its own army rather than end up sending 10,000 or 30,000 African troops. He added that UN troops would not be a solution and even doubted if the UN would step in Somalia any time soon. Instead, he recommended that the UN and AU work hand in hand to ensure the redeployment of the Ethiopian troops. If the Ethiopian troops do not withdraw fast, Chairperson Konare predicted dire implications for Ethiopia. He said that, for Ethiopia, withdrawing from Somalia would enable it to solve the trouble in the Ogaden and to contain the potential Islamist threat within its own borders.

¶21. (SBU): Chairperson Konare informed A/S Frazer that he had appointed a new representative for Somalia that will be based in Mogadishu in order to take part in the political process. He considered that the present Somali Government has left the AU aside on the political front, and believed that if the AU is not brought on board the situation in Somalia will not improve at all, with the dynamics set in Asmara getting the upper hand. A/S Frazer completely agreed with the analysis of Chairperson Konare and said that the focus should be on bringing in African troops. The USG is ready to provide USD 2-3 million to finance any contingent that is ready to go in. It will complete the training of the Burundian battalion by mid-October. The French did not train the Burundians well according to A/S Frazer, and the USG provided them training with the proper equipment.

¶22. (SBU): Chairperson Konare highlighted once again the urgency of getting African troops because he is greatly preoccupied by the

political situation in Burundi which was rather volatile and getting sticky, and also of the possibility that there could be a coup. He said that Commissioner Djinnit went to Burundi to advise Burundian President Nkurunziza to manage the political situation as serenely as possible. He said that the priority for Nigeria was Darfur and not Somalia. As to the possibility that South Africa would provide equipment, Chairperson Konare voiced his concern that South Africa's internal situation was not conducive. Commissioner Djinnit informed the meeting's participants that South Africa had initially made a general commitment to provide support in finance, logistics, and that he would pursue the matter with South African Foreign Minister Zuma. A/S Frazer inquired if Chapter 8 could be used to assist African troops to go in. Commissioner Djinnit replied that there was such a possibility, and that Chairperson Konare had sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon asking for the UN's assistance in finance and logistics. Chairperson Konare added that the UN ought to recognize that it has a responsibility to make sure that there is peace and a strong government in Somalia.

¶23. (SBU): A/S Frazer noted that the national reconciliation conference had actually issued a good communique and seems to try to reach out to all entities and groups. She raised the significance of having the AU speak out more on the extremist elements. A/S Frazer also said that Eritrea was playing the spoiler and that it was not acceptable. Chairperson Konare reiterated the importance of getting Ethiopian troops out, thus denying the anti-Ethiopian opposition of a pretext not to join in the dialogue. And, he said that the appointment of a new representative for Somalia based in Mogadishu was to increase the AU's evaluation, approval or censure of different groups. He agreed that Eritrea was acting as a troublemaker in Somalia, and also in Darfur. Nevertheless, he alluded to the support that Eritrea, which is too weak to act alone, receives from close allies of the US such as Qatar.

OTHER REGIONAL ISSUES

¶24. (SBU): Chairperson Konare then called the attention of A/S Frazer to a number of regional issues that the USG should be attentive to. The first issue was that of Sudan and Somalia. The second issue was the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. And the third issue was the deteriorating situation in the Sahel. Chairperson Konare said that he did not need to say more on the first issue, as it was sufficiently covered in the meeting. As to the second issue, that of the Democratic Republic of Congo, he recommended that President Kabila should be pressed not to put down the rebellion of General Nkunda militarily and rather seek dialogue and negotiation. He also identified the Interhamwe as the primary obstacle for a lasting peace in the country and emphasized the dire need to get rid of the threat from this force. A/S Frazer responded to this issue by saying that she has spoken to Presidents Museveni, Kabila and Kagame that they have all kept open their lines of communication, and that there will be soon a Tripartite Plus meeting

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in Kampala, Uganda. She acknowledged the need for a more aggressive joint operation to push back negative forces.

¶25. (SBU): Turning to the third issue, that of the Sahel, Chairperson Konare explained that drug trafficking was destabilizing the Sahel's fragile African states. The drug trafficking route going through the coast and Mauritania was responsible for destabilizing Mauritania, the north of Niger, the north of Mali, Chad, Darfur, and Algeria where a deadly suicide bomb attack occurred just yesterday. He raised the instability in Niger as a case in point. The Prime Minister's government was recently voted out of office, and the Tuareg are engaged in a rebellion in the north of the country. Furthermore, Niger has oil-related problems with Libya, and uranium-related problems with the French nuclear engineering group Areva. He said that he recently sent Commissioner Djinnit to urge Niger's President Tandja, who seems to have opted to crush the Tuareg rebellion militarily, to exercise maximum restraint. He also noted that Niger's destabilization could spill over and touch Chad, Darfur and Mali, citing the recent incident involving suspected Tuareg rebels who abducted Malian soldiers and took them off to Niger. Chairperson Konare was also concerned that a coup d'etat could be staged in Niger.

¶26. (SBU): Chairperson Konare especially criticized the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative launched by the USG. He complained that the initiative bypassed state authorities and dealt directly with local communities. He also questioned the rationale of the initiative citing the example of Morocco where Islamists are expected to make gains in the upcoming elections. A/S Frazer responded by saying that the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative aimed at countering extremist influences in the Sahel and at assisting governments to better control their borders by focusing on military training of state authorities while supporting NGO activities that assist local communities via USAID programs. She also pointed out the problem the USG has in dealing with rebel groups such as the ONLF and the Tuareg rebellion, which are domestically based but still entertain links to extremist groups such as Al Qaeda.

¶27. (SBU): A/S Frazer concluded the meeting by offering to follow-up with Chairperson Konare on strategizing about how best to deal with Africa's many insurgencies and to ensure that the TSCTP is effective in countering the terror threat in the Sahel.

¶28. (U:) Assistant Secretary Frazer has cleared this message.

YAMAMOTO